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ABSTRACT

This study examined the developmental and gender influences on children's normative emotional expression and control. The study surveyed 307 pairs of middle-class European-American children who were 7, 11, and 15 years old, and one parent of each child. The results of the survey showed that children were closer to the norm in their expressive behavior than in their control behavior. There was little age change in girls' normative expression and control and in boys' normative control. As for gender difference, the study notes that boys declined with age in normative expression, presumably because the expression items involved emotions such as fear, sadness, and joy, whose expression males are expected to inhibit as they mature. From a perspective of parents, the results showed that mothers and fathers agreed about children's normative emotional control, but that mothers presented more normative emotional expression. (Contains 56 references.) (AP)

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ED 380 212

Running Head: EXPRESSION AND CONTROL OF EMOTION-RELATED BEHAVIOR

Children's Expression and Control of Emotion-Related Behavior: Developmental and Gender Influences on Children's and Parents' Perceptions

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Abstract

Reports of children's emotional behavior, in situations for which social norms specified that either expression or control was appropriate, were obtained from 307 pairs of middle-class European-American children (7, 11, 15) and parents. Children were closer to the norm in their expressive than control behavior. There was little age change in girls' normative expression and control and in boys' normative control. Boys declined with age in normative expression, presumably because the expression items involved emotions such as fear, sadness, and joy whose expression males, more than females, are expected to inhibit as they mature. Mothers and fathers agreed about children's normative emotional control, but mothers reported more normative emotional expression. Mothers' and fathers' reports of normative expression and control correlated moderately with sons' reports (.29 to .38) and less with daughters' reports (-.19 to .27).

Children's Expression and Control of Emotion-Related Behavior:

Developmental and Gender Influences on Children's and Parents' Perceptions

Emotional competence plays an important role in social competence (Eisenberg, Fabes, Bernzweig, Karbon, Poulin, & Hanish, 1993; Eisenberg, Fabes, Nyman, Bernzweig, & Pinuelas, 1994; Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992; Hubbard & Coie, 1994; Saarni, 1989; Sroufe, 1984; Sroufe, Schork, Motti, Lawroski, & LaFreniere, 1984). Whether or not there is a biological pan-cultural substrate to emotions, as many believe there is (cf. Darwin, 1965; Frijda, 1988; Lewis & Michalson, 1983; Scherer & Ekman, 1984), cross-cultural work has shown that there are distinct culture-specific conceptualizations of the emotional domain, emotional experience, and the behaviors that should ensue from an emotional experience (Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Lutz & White, 1986). Successful socialization into a culture requires learning these conceptualizations. In the United States, studies indicate that how children handle their emotions is related to their sociometric status among peers. Popular and average children differ from rejected children in the frequency with which they express positive emotions and hostility to other children (Dodge, Coie, Pettit, & Price, 1990; Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, & LeMare, 1990). Higher social status boys have been found to experience negative affect less often and to be less intense emotionally (Eisenberg et al., 1993). Sroufe et al. (1984) have provided persuasive ethnographic descriptions of similar relationships among social status, emotional tone, and management of emotions.

As part of a larger investigation of the emotion socialization of middle class European-American children, the research reported here examined how children's and parents' perceptions of children's emotional behavior varied according to the child's and parent's genders, the child's age, and whether social norms stipulated that an emotion should be expressed or controlled. Emotional expression includes those behaviors that directly communicate what one is feeling: a raised voice and clenched fist when angry, tears and a downcast face when sad, a smile and laughing voice when happy. Emotional control includes attempts, whether through inhibition, masking, attenuation, or dissimulation, to avoid communicating directly what one is feeling: being very polite when angry, criticizing another when sad, looking mildly pleased when jubilant. Cultural norms identify the appropriate relationships among the emotion experienced, situational variables, and specific forms of expression and control; within society they promote functional rather than dysfunctional communication of emotion (Frijda, 1988). Throughout the paper, we will use "normative expression" to refer to the socially prescribed veridical expression of, and acting on the basis of, a felt emotion in a given situation, and "normative control" to refer to the socially prescribed restraint of veridical expression of, and of behavior based on, the felt emotion. Children high on normative expression are adhering to social norms and, for the emotions and situations assessed, directly expressing and acting upon their emotions. Children high on normative control are adhering to social norms and, for the emotions and situations assessed, not directly expressing or acting upon their emotions.

For this work, children and parents reported children's behavior in particular situations for which prior work had established the relevant social norms for emotion-related behaviors. For some situations, expression of the emotion was considered appropriate by a high proportion of parents; for others, control was considered appropriate. This normative perspective relates what is said and done to culturally established understandings about what is the most appropriate, although not necessarily the most common, behavior. Because one of childhood's tasks is to learn these norms and come to adhere to them, children's reported behavior was recoded to reflect the degree to which it conformed to the pertinent social norm. It was expected that the normativeness of children's emotion-related behavior would increase during early and middle childhood. Whether it would continue through adolescence is debatable. Although adolescence has been characterized as

an emotionally stormy period in which norms of all sorts are tested, the prevalent view today is more moderate (Petersen, 1988). Thus, if there is any decrement in normative emotional behavior during adolescence, it should be a small one.

Our formulation has much in common with the construct of emotional display rules. As proposed by Ekman and Friesen (1969), display rules are cultural prescriptions for whether, when, and how to express and act upon one's emotions. In practice, most American research about children's display rules has examined knowledge rather than behavior and control rather than expression; for example, acting pleased when actually disappointed and dampening angry outbursts. There is evidence that children's knowledge of such display rules increases during childhood, as does their ability and tendency to enact them verbally and facially (Cole, 1985, 1986; Gnepp & Hess, 1986; Harris, Olthof, & Meerum Terwogt, 1981, Saarni, 1979, 1982, 1984; Shennum & Bugental, 1982; Strayer, 1985; Taylor & Harris, 1984).

Biologically based and functional theories both emphasize the communicative, action-oriented role of emotions in everyday life (cf. Darwin, 1965; Frijda, 1988; Lewis & Michalson, 1983; Scherer & Ekman, 1984). Emotions are, in these views, designed to be expressed. A child's first inclination should, therefore, be toward emotional expression. Control, whether through partial or complete inhibition or dissimulation, requires more learning, as well as the development of greater capacity for voluntary self inhibition. For these reasons, children should have more difficulty adhering to cultural norms for emotional control. However, as Wierzbicka (1994) has so compellingly illustrated in comparisons of Anglo and Polish emotion systems, there are cultural expectations for both emotional expression and emotional control. Thus, we expect children to become more normative in both expression and control of their emotion-related behavior as they mature but to do better when the social norm dictates expression rather than control.

In American culture, there are widely shared expectations about gender-based differences in emotional expression and control. Children and adults believe that females are generally more emotionally expressive than males (e.g., Birnbaum & Chemelski, 1984; Birnbaum, Nosanchuk, & Croll, 1980; Brody, 1993; Fabes & Martin, 1991; Shields, 1984); however, this belief does not apply equally to all emotions. In particular, males are believed to be more likely than females to express anger (Birnbaum & Chemelski, 1984; Fabes & Martin, 1991). Gender-based differences are also expected to show up more in older than younger people (Fabes & Martin, 1991). Thus, stereotypically, females express joy, love, fear, and sadness and control anger more than males control joy, love, fear, and sadness and express anger, and these differences are more evident among adolescents and adults than children. It is unclear how much these differences are seen to arise from gender differences in actual emotional experience or in what ensues from one's emotional experience (Stoppard & Gruchy, 1993). There are three logical possibilities for how gender-based stereotypes for emotional expression and control relate to cultural norms for handling emotions: (1) The stereotypes describe small differences by gender in behavioral norms that all fall within a single cultural standard; (2) they describe differences by gender in who is likely to move outside the common cultural standard; or (3) they describe two separate sets of emotional norms, one for males and another for females. The work reported here was organized according to the first perspective, but we will return to this issue in the discussion.

While cultural stereotypes about male and female emotionality are fairly clear, there are only suggestions of gender differences in socialization experiences and actual behavior. Work with young children suggests that parents encourage verbal expression of emotions through discussion and attention to others' emotions more with their daughters than sons (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Fabes et al., 1994; Keubli & Krieger, 1991; Zahn-Waxler, 1991). Children's peers also encourage different types of emotional behavior. Girls and boys mostly segregate themselves into separate peer groups. In girls' groups, emotional expression that promotes close interpersonal relationships is encouraged, whereas in boys' groups interpersonal distance and status hierarchies,

with the attendant assertiveness, aggression, and verbal dueling, are emphasized (Maccoby, 1990). Given these several findings about stereotypes, socialization, and behavior, we hypothesized that girls would evidence more emotional expression of joy, sadness, fear, and upset (but not anger) than would boys and that this gender difference would increase with age. As previously explained, higher emotional expression scores in this study were also more normative.

A similar pattern was predicted for emotional control. Control of anger rather than full-blown, direct expression is by and large normative for both boys and girls, and both genders learn these control norms (Doubleday, Kovaric, & Dorr, 1990; Doubleday, Kovaric, Dorr, Beizer Seidner, & Lotta, 1986; Gnepp & Hess, 1986). However, expression of anger is more common, and hence presumably more socially accepted, for males than females. Preschool boys have been observed to express anger more than girls (Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992), and preschool children perceived males as expressing anger more intensely than females (Karbon, Fabes, Carlo, & Martin, 1992). Preadolescent boys reported greater use than did girls of expressive strategies such as hitting or yelling in dealing with anger (Whitesell, Robinson, & Harter, 1993). Taffel (1990) argued that men express anger in situations where women would be depressed. In addition, studies of reported adherence to control norms for other emotions have shown strong age-related increases for girls but not boys (Meerum Terwogt & Olthof, 1989; Saarni, 1984). Given these several findings, we hypothesized that girls would evidence more emotional control of anger, irritability, and the like than would boys and that this gender difference would increase with age. Again, higher emotional control scores in this study were also more normative. Given the gender differences in the cultural stereotypes and socialization pressures for our measures of normative expression and control, at all ages girls' emotional behavior should be more normative than boys'.

Parents and children should not completely agree on the children's emotional behavior. Social desirability pressures would lead children to rate their behavior as closer to normative than would their parents. Because inappropriate expressions of anger and other strong negative feelings can be especially noxious, parents may be particularly sensitive to children's failures to exercise emotional control, as defined in this study. If so, the disparity between children's and parents' ratings should be greater for control than for expression.

Differences in mothers' and fathers' perceptions of children's emotional behavior have not been studied directly. Socialization research has suggested that mothers and fathers differently affect their children. Mothers' behavior has been shown to relate more strongly than fathers' behavior to children's aggressive, hostile, and anti-social behavior (externalizing behavior) (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). However, empathic adults had fathers who were highly involved with their young children (Koestner, Franz, & Weinberger, 1990). If mothers and fathers do generally have different effects on their children's emotional development, then perhaps their perceptions of the children's emotional behaviors also differ. Mothers and fathers may differ in their attention to certain emotions, emphasis on expressive vs. controlled behavior, or valuing of certain emotions or behaviors. Given that mothers continue to have more responsibility for child rearing than do fathers (Lamb, 1986), they may be more invested in believing that their work has produced well-behaved children, may see failure to meet ideal standards as a normal part of childhood and hence view their children's behavior as more normative, or may react more negatively to children's troublesome behavior, especially their lack of emotional control. Thus, there are several reasons to expect that mothers and fathers will differ in their perceptions of children's emotional behavior, some reason to expect that these differences will be greater for emotional control than emotional expression, and no clear way to predict which parent will see the child's behavior as more normative.

Because women generally have more opportunities than men to be aware of their children's behavior and to interact with children about their behavior, it could be argued that mothers' and children's perceptions of the children's emotional behavior should agree more than fathers' and children's perceptions. Alternatively, it could be argued that children and parents of the same

gender will agree more than children and parents of opposite genders. Because gender is an important aspect of self definition in our culture and carries with it some prescriptions for emotional expression and control, children and parents of the same gender may be expected to share more similar approaches to and interpretations of emotional behavior than would children and parents of the opposite gender. We are more persuaded by the arguments for this second position.

In summary, this study tested seven hypotheses about developmental and gender influences on children's normative emotional expression and control, as reported by both children and one of their parents. Reports are, of course, indirect assessments of behavior and liable to reflect various forms of social desirability and schema influences. At the same time, they make possible the assessment of relatively infrequent, ecologically valid behaviors that cannot otherwise be easily accessed. Thus, the hypotheses are couched in terms of actual behavior, assuming that such behavior is reasonably well indexed by self reports. Some hypotheses are tentative, being drawn from a weak empirical base, conflicting findings, or conflicting theories. The hypotheses are formally stated as follows:

1. The normativeness of children's emotional behavior will either increase linearly from 7 to 15 years or increase from 7 to 11 years and then decrease at 15 years.

2. Children's expressive behavior will be more normative than will their control behavior.

3. Girls will be more normative in their emotional behavior than will boys.

4. Girls will show both more normative emotional expression and more normative emotional control than boys, and these gender differences will increase with age.

5. Parents will report that their children's emotional behavior is less normative than the children report, and the disparity will be greater for control than expression.

6. Mothers and fathers will differ in their perceptions of children's normative emotional behavior, and the difference will be greater for control than expression.

7. Same-gender parent-child pairs will agree more on the child's normative emotional behavior than will opposite-gender parent-child pairs.

Method

Participants

The sample, which was selected from a much larger one, consisted of 614 people: 307 European-American middle-class children, ages 7, 11, and 15 (153 boys, 154 girls) and one parent for each child (149 fathers, 158 mothers). In order to reduce culturally-based variability in norms for emotion-related behavior, the larger sample (1692 children, 1270 parents) was recruited from locations that would maximize the participation of middle-class European-American background families. In each family, one parent and one 7-, 11-, or 15-year-old child were required to participate, but there were no requirements as to parent or child gender. At each of 42 Southern California public, parochial, and private schools, all 7-, 11-, and 15-year-olds were invited to participate and, if parent and child consents were obtained, were tested. For this study, subsample selection occurred in two steps. First, all participating European-American fathers and their children were selected. Second, from among those European-American children whose mothers had participated, mother-child pairs were randomly selected until the number of children by age and gender was about the same as the comparable cell for father-child pairs. In the resulting sample, there were more 11- and 15-year-olds than 7-year-olds; however, within age, boys and girls and mothers and fathers were divided relatively equally. In the 3 (child age) by 2 (child

gender) by 2 (parent gender) by 2 (parent-child reporter) between subjects design, the smallest cell had 18 subjects and the largest had 37.

Instruments

Perceptions of children's emotional behavior were measured by a 13-item questionnaire that children completed for their own behavior and parents completed for the children's behavior. Items all asked about children's behavior in situations for which other work had revealed, among parents, a consensus about what was normative and, among both parents and children, a good two-factor structure that was easily interpreted as items for which social norms required reasonably veridical expression of the emotion and items for which social norms required inhibition, masking, attenuation, or dissimulation of the emotion (Doubleday et al., 1986, 1990).

The social norms questionnaire was developed first, and the emotional behavior questionnaire was directly derived from it. A pool of about 75 emotional situations and associated behaviors was first established drawing on items in the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1981), Saarni's (1982) assessment of emotion socialization, studies of children's knowledge of display rules (Gnepp & Hess, 1986; Saarni, 1979), and focus group discussions with younger children and parents. Expert review and pilot tests with young children to identify ambiguous items and those without clear social norms and efforts to balance items on a number of characteristics produced a 25-item questionnaire administered to 30 7- and 11-year-olds and 33 adults. Each item presented an emotion-related behavior, balanced for normative and non-normative for the given situation and actor/feeler, and respondents were asked what percentage of people like themselves (parents) or like their parents (children) believed the behavior was appropriate for the situation.

Based on the results of this pilot test, 5 items were discarded and a 20-item norms questionnaire was administered to 832 children and parents whose demographic characteristics were very similar to those of the large sample used for the study reported here. Factor analyses by age, gender, and age by gender subgroups consistently produced a two-factor solution representing normative expression and control. An item was retained if parents agreed about what was normative and it performed well in the factor analyses. The resulting 13-item emotional norm questionnaire was administered to 1692 children and 1270 parents, and analyses confirmed the previous parent consensus and parent and child two-factor expression/control structure.

The emotional behavior questionnaire was comprised of the same 13 norm items edited so that the feeler/behaver was the participating child subject and the felt emotion was expressed, whether or not expression was normative. The child's version began "How likely are you to...." Sample expression and control items are respectively "Show it when someone in your family makes you happy" and "Shout at your mother or father when you're angry." The parent's version began "How likely is your child to..." and items were reworded to refer to the child. Children and parents indicated likely child behavior on a 5-point scale with endpoints labelled "probably won't" and "probably will" for children and "very unlikely" and "very likely" for parents.

Factor analyses of the behavior questionnaires for all parents (n=1270) and children (n=1692) separately and by age and gender subgroups, each yielded two-factor solutions like those for the norms questionnaire. For parents, two items cross loaded and were dropped, leaving five items on the expression factor and six items on the control factor. For children, five items cross loaded and were dropped, leaving four items on the expression factor and four items on the control factor. For expression, Cronbach alphas were .72 for both children and parents; for control, they were .53 for children and .63 for parents. Emotion terms in both parent and child expression factors were "excitement," "happy," "upset," and "afraid." "Sad" was added for parents. Emotion terms in both parent and child control factors were "angry" (three items) and "bad mood." "Strong negative emotions" and "excited" were added for parents.

Procedures

Parents completed their social norms and child behavior questionnaires, along with five other instruments not reported here, at home and returned them by mail. Children completed these two questionnaires, along with nine other instruments, at school. The 7-year-olds were tested individually. All material was read aloud while they read silently, and they were helped to write their answers. Older children completed the questionnaires on their own in groups of 5-30 under the supervision of research assistants.

Results

Analyses reported here used mean normative expression and normative control scores based on 11 items for parents and 8 items for children. Results were the same whether three items were added for the child measure or three items were removed for the parent measure. The first five hypotheses were tested in a 5-way ANOVA with subsequent post hoc tests using Tukey's HSD Test and .05 significance level (Kirk, 1968) when indicated by the specific hypothesis and the significance of the relevant main effect or interaction. The ANOVA had four between subjects variables, Child Age (3), Child Gender (2), Parent Gender (2), and Respondent Status (2, parent/child), and one within subject variable, Behavior Type (2, expression/control).

There were significant main effects for child age, $F(2,589) = 15.93$, $p < .001$, child gender, $F(1,589) = 13.32$, $p < .001$, respondent status, $F(1,589) = 13.91$, $p < .001$, and behavior type, $F(1,589) = 290.72$, $p < .001$. As predicted by hypotheses 2, 3, and 5 respectively, emotional behavior was more normative for expression than control (Ms = 4.0, 3.3), girls' emotional behavior was more normative than boys' (Ms = 3.8, 3.6), and parents reported that children's behavior was less normative than children reported (Ms = 3.6, 3.7). Contrary to hypothesis 1, the normativeness of children's emotional behavior declined linearly with increasing age (Ms = 3.8, 3.7, 3.5). These main effects are all qualified by higher order interactions involving the same variables.

All two- and three-way interactions among child age, child gender, and behavior type were significant. The significant interaction of child age and gender, $F(2,589) = 7.15$, $p < .001$, reflects boys' decreasing normativeness (Ms = 3.9, 3.5, 3.4) and girls' stable normativeness (Ms = 3.8, 3.8, 3.7) with increasing age. The significant child age by behavior type interaction, $F(2,589) = 11.97$, $p < .001$, reflects the decreasing normativeness of children's expression (Ms = 4.3, 4.0, 3.8) and the unchanging normativeness of their control (Ms = 3.4, 3.3, 3.3) with increasing age. The significant child gender by behavior type interaction, $F(1,589) = 5.42$, $p < .05$, reflects girls equalling boys in normative control (Ms = 3.4, 3.3 respectively) and exceeding them in normative expression (Ms = 4.1, 3.8). The significant child age by child gender by behavior type interaction, $F(2,589) = 5.62$, $p < .005$, is shown in Figure 1. As predicted in hypothesis 4, girls were higher in normative expression than boys and the difference between them increased with age. At 7, boys and girls did not differ in normative expression, but at ages 11 and 15 girls were significantly more normative in expression than boys. Contrary to hypothesis 4, boys and girls did not differ consistently in normative control and the difference did not increase with age. Post-hoc comparisons showed that boys' and girls' normative control was the same at 7 and 15 and that girls exercised significantly more normative control than boys at 11.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As already reported, parents saw their children's behavior as less normative than the children saw it (hypothesis 5). The significant interaction between respondent status and behavior type, $F(1,589) = 136.50$, $p < .001$, and subsequent post-hoc comparisons confirmed the second

part of hypothesis 5 that parents' and children's perceptions would differ more for control than expression. However, as shown in Figure 2, this interaction qualifies the first part of hypothesis 5, because parents see their children's expression as significantly more normative than do the children. Thus, hypothesis 5 is supported only for perceptions of children's normative control of their emotional behavior. The interaction does not qualify the support for hypothesis 2, because both parents and children perceived children's expressive behavior to be significantly more normative than their control behavior.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Hypothesis 6, that mothers and fathers would differ in their perceptions of children's normative emotional behavior, was tested by analyzing parental reports of children's behavior in a 4-way ANOVA with three between subjects variables, Child Age (3), Child Gender (2), and Parent Gender (2), and one within subject variable, Behavior Type (2, expression/control). The significant main effect for parent gender, $F(1,296) = 4.91$, $p < .05$, is qualified by a significant interaction between parent gender and behavior type, $F(1,296) = 7.09$, $p < .01$. Mothers and fathers did not differ in their reports of the normativeness of children's emotional control (Ms = 3.0, 3.0), but mothers reported significantly more normative emotional expression than did fathers (Ms = 4.2, 4.0). Thus, the general hypothesis of gender differences in parents' reports was supported, but the expectation that the difference would be more pronounced for emotional control than expression was not supported; the reverse was found.

There was no support for hypothesis 7, that same-gender parent-child pairs would agree more on the child's behavior than would opposite-gender parent-child pairs, nor was there support for the alternative hypothesis, that mothers and children would agree more than would fathers and children. As shown in Table 1, the average correlation in reports of normative expression and control is not higher for father-son and mother-daughter pairs nor for mother-child pairs. The pattern of correlations suggests instead that mothers and fathers are both more likely to agree with their sons than with their daughters in their perceptions of the children's normative emotional expression and control. These correlations are for all three ages combined. Correlations for each of the three ages separately also revealed no evidence for greater agreement either for same-gender parent-child pairs or for mother-child pairs. Instead, parents agreed either more with their sons than their daughters or about equally with both.

Insert Table 1 about here

There were two unexpected significant interactions in the 5-way ANOVA described earlier. Both were two-way interactions involving parent gender; neither interaction involved the status of the respondent, nor was it qualified by a higher level interaction. Thus, the differences appear in both the parents' and the children's reports of the children's behavior. The significant interaction of parent gender and behavior type, $F(1,589) = 8.29$, $p < .01$, reflects the finding that perceived normative control did not differ according to whether the mother or father participated in the study (Ms = 3.3, 3.4) but perceived normative expression was significantly greater for children with mothers than fathers participating (Ms = 4.1, 3.9). The significant interaction of parent gender and child gender, $F(1,589) = 7.86$, $p < .01$, reflects the finding that there was no difference in the normativeness of the emotion-related behaviors of girls and boys whose fathers participated (Ms = 3.7, 3.6), but among children whose mothers participated, girls' behavior was seen to be more normative than boys' behavior (Ms = 3.8, 3.5).

Discussion

The 7- to 15-year-old children in this study all showed relatively competent emotion-related behavior, as reported by both a child and one of his or her parents. Taking 3 on the 5-point scale as the dividing line between more and less normative behavior, only 10% (5) of the 48 means in the 5-factor design fell below 3, whereas 63% (30) were between 3 and 4, and 27% (13) were greater than 4. Few will be surprised to learn that all 5 low scores were parental reports of children's behaviors that should have been controlled and 4 were about boys; in contrast, 12 of the 13 high scores were about behaviors that should have been expressed and the 13 were equally about boys and girls. Although relatively competent, children's reported behavior was less normative than what parents believed to be the norms of their sociocultural group.

As those who emphasize the evolutionary basis for emotions would have predicted, children's scores for normative expression were high, reflecting considerable expressive behavior, while their scores for normative control were lower, reflecting more expressive behavior in situations in which control is socially normative. The predominance of expression would be expected if emotions serve communicative functions for the species. In this view, humans are born with the capacity to express basic emotions in ways that are readily recognized by others, thereby promoting the youngsters' well being and ultimately that of the species. With maturation and socialization come other forms of expression, greater capacity to inhibit expression, and knowledge of and adherence to the culture-specific norms for both expression and control of emotional experience.

In this study, there were no age-related increases in the extent to which children's emotion-related behaviors conformed to sociocultural norms for their expression or control. This may be due to the fact that emotion-related behavior was assessed for situations for which clear parental norms existed. Such situations may be among the earliest and most strongly socialized so that little further change would occur during the period we assessed. An alternative explanation is that respondents adjusted their implicit scales for the frequency of any given emotion-related behavior to take account of the child's status. For example, twice daily shouting when angry at the parent might be rated as moderately frequent when a 7-year-old was shouting but highly frequent when a 15-year-old was. Such implicit scale adjustment would do away with age differences in our measure.

In the aggregate, parents and children agreed more than disagreed in their perceptions of children's emotion-related behavior. They did not differ in their perceptions of the three ages' or two genders' behaviors nor in finding normative expression higher than normative control. For situations for which expression was normative, parents saw children as somewhat more normative (meaning, more expressive) than did the children. For situations for which control was normative, parents saw children as much less normative or, put another way, as much more likely to express and act upon emotions that "should be controlled." This pattern is also consonant with theories emphasizing the communicative functions of emotional expression. In this view, parents would be attuned to the information value of their children's emotions and notice any expression of them. The greater parent-child disparity in perceived normative control could occur because the behaviors that should be controlled (e.g., shouting, bossing, and bragging) are more likely to cause trouble to which the parent must attend or because parents find them more noxious than behaviors that should be expressed. The moderate to low correlations between an individual parent's and his or her own child's reports of the child's behavior, in conjunction with the group data, suggest that parental and child agreement is based somewhat on shared perceptions of the specific child's actual behavior and somewhat more on shared schema and other cognitions.

The greater correlations for parent-son reports than for parent-daughter reports were one of several findings related to gender. Others were, for normative control, the absence of gender

differences in boys' and girls' behaviors and in mothers' and fathers' perceptions and, for normative expression, the presence of gender differences in the same two areas. Two possible, though certainly debatable, explanations for the greater agreement of parents with sons than daughters are that boys' behavior can be more attention-getting and memorable and that boys' behavior is more consistent, presumably because it is subjected to greater socialization pressure and/or environmental constraint. The absence of predicted gender differences in children's normative control behavior and in parents' perceptions of it may be due, as we suggested earlier, to the fact that the items presented situations with broadly applicable, strong norms. In this regard, it is notable that the gender difference in children's normative expression occurs because older boys decrease in their expressive behavior. This could reflect increasing adherence to cultural restrictions on men's exhibition of and involvement with the more tender emotions assessed in the normative expression items (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1975; Ross & Mirowsky, 1984). Other research found similar gender differences in children's predictions of how much they would express fear (Meerum Terwogt & Olthof, 1989) and numerous studies, as reviewed in the introduction, report similar gender differences in children's and adults' expectations or stereotypes about how males and females handle these emotions. Mothers' greater reports of these emotions are consonant with the perception of females as more attuned to emotions and more willing to talk about and acknowledge them, particularly for the softer emotions.

This discussion of gender differences in expressivity again raises issues about what constitutes a sociocultural norm for emotional behavior. Drawing on cross-cultural work, we took the position that there are broadly applicable norms that may have some moderate variation according to certain status characteristics (e.g., age, gender) of the person experiencing the emotion. Our research approach was, first, to identify a set of emotion-situation combinations for which parents held clear ideas about what was expected in terms of control or expression of the emotion and, then, to examine parents' and children's perceptions of children's actual behavior when feeling the given emotion in the given situation. The expression and control norm items were similar with respect to the adult/child and male/female status of the person experiencing the relevant emotion. Parents estimated that 73% to 94% (mean 87%) of people like themselves would agree on the norms for these items, and gender differences were not found. From both theoretical and methodological perspectives, then, the items could be seen to tap norms that were broadly applicable to members of the sociocultural group. However, shifting from the general population perspective in the norms questionnaire to the individual child perspective in the other questionnaires revealed several gender differences, the most notable being boys' developmental decrease in expressing emotions in situations where parents believed expression was the norm.

The limited data in this study do not permit further examination of the questions of how one identifies cultural norms and the group(s) to whom they apply nor of whether the same norms operate in actual everyday behavior and in abstracted discussion. Our findings are based on children's reported, not directly observed, behavior in a few types of situations involving five basic emotions and general dysphoria. For all situations, parents concurred on the norms for appropriate emotional behavior by the person(s) feeling the emotion in the given situation, but there are no data on whether parental norms would have been exactly the same for the six age by gender groups whose behavior was assessed in this study. Moreover, while some emotions were represented in both the normative expression and normative control scores, not all emotions were, and some emotions are represented by only one situation. Future work that addresses these matters and compares middle-class European-Americans to other populations will help to clarify age- and gender-based patterns of emotional behavior and to relate developmental research to work in social and cultural psychology, personality, and cultural anthropology (for further discussion, see Fox, 1994; Parke, 1994).

Another extension of the present study would select participating families and gather information about them to account for differences we found in families with participating fathers compared to participating mothers. Our sample was volunteers where a child of the target age and

either gender and a parent or parent-figure of either gender were willing to participate. Only 16% of the participating parents were fathers. We assume there is something about them and/or their families that accounts for the finding of greater differentiation in the reported emotional behaviors of children whose mothers participated in the study than in the behaviors of children whose fathers participated, a finding that seems to run counter to Seigal's (1987) report that fathers gender type children more than mothers do. Our findings cannot be attributed to either the children or the parents alone, since the two significant interactions were for scores that are means of the parent and child reports and there were no significant higher-order interactions involving the status (parent vs. child) of the reporter. Analyses of several other measures on this sample (e.g., parents' and children's perceptions of social norms, children's satisfaction with their families, and parents' teaching and modeling of emotional norms) showed that families with participating fathers are not consistent levelers who tend to smooth out differences while families with participating mothers are sharpeners who accentuate them. It is unfortunate that we did not get other information about the families' demographic and social climate characteristics that might account for the differences we found.

In conclusion, our findings show that children, while generally able to handle their emotion-related behavior according to sociocultural norms, did better when the norm stipulated expression rather than control. Compared to their parents' perceptions, children greatly overestimated the frequency with which they appropriately controlled their emotions and slightly underestimated the frequency with which they appropriately expressed their emotions. Together these two findings indicate that parents were very aware of their children's emotional expressions, an awareness that no doubt helped them do a good job caring for and socializing their children. Gender differences in children's normative expression and in parents' perceptions of it were consonant with other research showing that, particularly for such "tender" emotions as fear, sadness, and joy, females are more expressive than males. Mothers reported more such expression than did fathers, and parents and children both reported that boys decreased in such expression as they got older. Virtually all findings in this study support the usefulness of distinguishing between normative expression and normative control of one's emotion. They also raise issues about what constitutes a sociocultural norm, suggesting that there may be several levels at which norms are conceptualized and applied. Finally, they are consonant with both the biological and enculturation explanations of emotional behavior.

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Table 1

Parent-Child Correlations in Perceived Normative Emotional Expression and Control Behaviors

	Expression		Control	
	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers
Sons	.36**	.38***	.30**	.29*
	N=75	N=77	N=75	N=78
Daughters	.12	.17	.27*	-.19
	N=74	N=79	N=74	N=80

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Combined child and parent reports of children's normative emotional expression and control by child's age and gender. (Possible scores range from 5, normative behavior very likely, to 1, normative behavior very unlikely.)

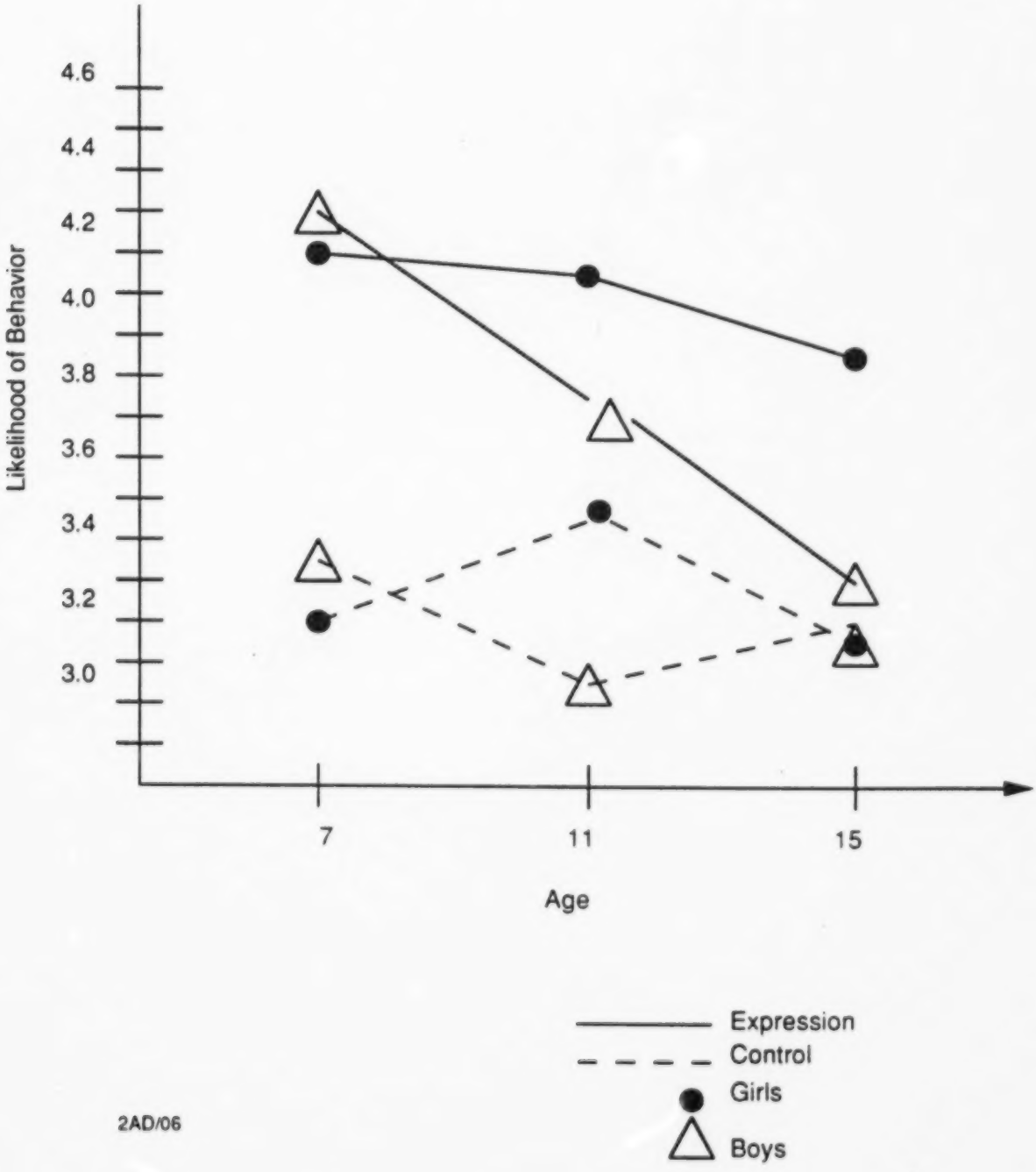

Figure 2. Children's normative emotional expression and control as reported by children and parents. (Possible scores range from 5, normative behavior very likely, to 1, normative behavior very unlikely.)